



473958

# Neighbors question EPA remedies for contamination at Pagel Pit

The government will no longer require a pump and treatment system called for in 1991.

By ISAAC GUERRERO  
Rockford Register Star

ROCKFORD — The federal government will enforce less stringent remedies to correct decades of contamination at the Pagel Pit Superfund site, despite concerns of nearby homeowners.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is no longer requiring a costly pump and treatment system to be installed, contrary to its 1991 remedies. The EPA had ordered the landfill capped, liquid and gas waste removal, and a \$3.1 million pump and treatment system installed.

The Illinois EPA made similar recommendations two years ago.

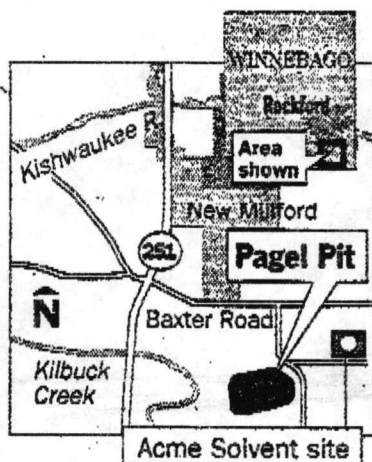
The pump device is not required under last week's order because EPA officials believe an existing system at the nearby Acme Solvent Superfund site will reduce contamination at Pagel Pit. Polluted groundwater from the Acme site has worsened contamination at the landfill, owned by Winnebago Reclamation Services.

"The state and the feds have analyzed this sucker to death, and the fact is it's not a health hazard to nearby homes," said Sue Grans, spokeswoman for William Charles Ltd., the parent company of Winnebago Reclamation.

The EPA now says contaminated groundwater at the west end of the landfill "is not a threat" to private, residential wells to the west and northwest of the site, "nor will it become a threat."

Blum said the EPA forbids groundwater at Pagel Pit and an area west of Kilbuck Creek from ever being used as drinking water because it still poses a health risk.

Winnebago Reclamation must continue monitoring 33 groundwater wells at the site and will be subject to unannounced EPA inspections. Officials say the polluted groundwater at Pagel Pit will cleanse itself through a natural process.



Rockford Registered Star

## EPA report

A copy of the U.S. EPA report on the Pagel Pit Superfund site is available for viewing at the Rockford Public Library, 215 N. Wyman St.

If future tests indicate higher levels of contamination than allowed, the EPA will reconsider its latest decision and order a different remedy, EPA community involvement officer Gordon Blum said.

EPA officials met with neighboring property owners in September to discuss the proposed decision about the 100-acre landfill between Kilbuck Creek and Lindenwood Road.

Homeowners fear contamination is still leaking into Kilbuck Creek and west of the landfill where pockets of homes are located.

Darius Trosper used to enjoy fishing for smallmouth bass in Kilbuck Creek, which runs alongside his 65-acre farm on Illinois 251, west of Pagel Pit. But Trosper said he thinks pollution from the landfill has killed off many of the fish that once called the creek home.

"Since I bought this place, the size and number of smallmouth bass has diminished in that creek," Trosper said.

Although the new EPA order doesn't require the pump system, Trosper said he'd like to see Winnebago Reclamation install it anyway to quell his and other home-

## Key dates

■ **1972:** A former sand and gravel quarry is converted to Pagel Pit landfill on Lindenwood Road, five miles south-east of Rockford.

■ **1978:** EPA officials begin investigating alleged violations at Pagel Pit.

■ **1981:** A gas venting system is installed at the landfill after methane gas is detected in nearby homes.

■ **1984:** U.S. EPA puts Pagel Pit on its Superfund list of highly polluted areas, after finding high levels of arsenic and other volatile organic compounds.

■ **1991:** EPA requires the landfill be capped as it reaches capacity, and that a pump and treatment system be installed to remove contaminants.

■ **1999:** EPA amends its 1991 order. Officials say the pump system is no longer needed and that ongoing inspection of monitoring wells along with other remedies should reduce pollution levels.

owners' worries.

"We believe that the EPA should enforce the 1991 order and require the pump system," said Dean Ekborg, who lives in Rockford and owns Ekborg Materials — a private quarry near the landfill. "To take a Superfund site and then turn around and say it's OK — I think that's just wrong."

Trash from Rockford and sanitary sludge from the Rock River Water Reclamation District has been dumped there since 1972. The landfill is expected to reach capacity within two years and one-third of it has already been capped.

Winnebago Reclamation plans to expand the dump by 27½ acres to the south, allowing it to operate for another 25 years.

Tests at the landfill in 1981 revealed high levels of volatile organic compounds and arsenic. Homeowners were forced to use bottled water supplied by Winnebago Reclamation.

The agency put Pagel Pit on its Superfund list of highly polluted areas in 1984 after finding ammonia, heavy metals and other volatile compounds in groundwater and soil samples.